NATIONAL TREASURY

MFMA Circular No. 79

Municipal Finance Management Act No. 56 of 2003

Municipal Budget Circular for the 2016/17 MTREF

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Introduction

The budget circular is compiled annually to guide municipalities on how to prepare their budget inputs. This circular is a follow-up to the MFMA Budget Circular No.78 that focused on the preparation of the 2016/17 Medium Term Revenue and Expenditure Framework (MTREF). This guidance includes national policy imperatives that should be accommodated and other relevant information. The circular provides a summary of South Africa's economic outlook, inflationary targets, financial management issues and specific reference on how to give effect to National Treasury's Municipal Budget and Reporting Regulations (MBRR). The key focus of this circular is the impact of the date of the 2016 Local Government Elections on municipalities affected by re-demarcations and the changes to the local government grant allocations.

1. 2016 Local Government Elections and the budget process

1.1 Impact of Local Government Elections on demarcation changes

The date of the 2016 local government elections has not yet been declared, which means that it is also not yet known when the new demarcations will come into effect. The re-demarcation could take place before or after the start of the 2016/17 municipal financial year, which begins on 01 July 2016.

Allocations published in the 2016 Division of Revenue Bill are based on the new municipal boundaries because these new demarcations will be in effect for the majority of the 2016/17 municipal financial year. The following guidance was provided in the MFMA Budget Circular No. 78:

If the elections are held before 01 July 2016, merging municipalities will be expected to:

- Compile individual budgets for the 2016/17 MTREF and work as a team with other affected municipalities on the planning and technical processes in compiling the consolidated budget for the newly demarcated municipality; and
- Complete the remaining weeks of the financial year on their existing budget structures (and existing demarcations). The allocations published in the 2016 Division of Revenue Bill will then be transferred to the re-demarcated municipalities from 01 July 2016.

However, additional clauses have been added to section 38 of the 2016 Division of Revenue Bill to enable the National Treasury to gazette revised allocations if the elections take place after 01 July 2016.

If elections are held after 01 July 2016, the following is expected:

- Revised allocations to be transferred to the current 278 municipalities for the period between 01 July 2016 and the date of the elections (when the re-demarcated municipal boundaries will come into effect);
- The remaining allocations will be transferred to the re-demarcated municipalities after the elections;
- Merging municipalities to compile individual budgets for the 2016/17 MTREF and work as a team with other affected municipalities on the planning and technical processes in compiling the consolidated budget for the newly demarcated municipality; and
- Municipalities to implement the individual budgets until the new re-demarcations come into effect.

In areas affected by major re-demarcations the focus of the budget process for the 2016/17 MTREF should be on preparing the budget of the new municipalities that will come into effect

on the date of the 2016 local government elections. Public consultations and decisions regarding tariffs and spending priorities should be focused on how these new institutions will be funded and deliver services. As elections must be held by mid-August (in terms of the requirements of section 24 of the Municipal Structures Act) these new municipalities will be responsible for delivering services for the majority of the 2016/17 financial year and over the rest of the medium term period. Preparation of these budget documents should be led by the Change Management Committee established to manage the implications of re-demarcations in each area.

The councils of the pre-election municipalities affected by the boundary change must jointly consider the budget for the new municipality to be established to ensure that all the issues are addressed e.g. budget related policies. The draft budget prepared by the Change Management Committee and agreed to by the pre-election councils should then be adopted by the newly elected council as soon as possible after it is constituted. If there are changes to be made, they must be considered during the 2016/17 adjustments budget or the 2017/18 MTREF.

Municipalities that will be merged or disestablished on the date of the local government elections must also prepare 2016/17 MTREF budgets for their existing municipality. If the election is held after 01 July then expenditure and the collection of revenue will be done in terms of this budget until the budget of the new council is adopted. The budgets that these municipalities prepare must be aligned to the budget for the new municipality described above.

If two municipalities are merging then the total of the transfers they budget to receive should be equal to the total allocated to the new municipality in the 2016 Division of Revenue Bill. Municipalities can use the proportion of funds allocated to each municipality in terms of the 2015 Division of Revenue Act as a guide to how to apportion 2016/17 MTEF allocations between the existing municipalities. For example, if municipality 1 and municipality 2 are merging to form municipality 3 and municipality 1 received an equitable share twice as large as municipality 2 in 2015/16, then municipality 1 should prepare a 2016/17 MTREF budget based on receiving 66.6 per cent of the equitable share allocation published for municipality 3 in the 2016 Division of Revenue Bill.

If the local government election date is after 01 July 2016, National Treasury will gazette how much will be transferred to each pre-election municipality for the period between 01 July 2016 and Election Day. In terms of the requirements and process set out in section 38 of the 2016 Division of Revenue Bill, this gazette will be issued within 2 weeks after the election date is announced or the Bill is enacted (whichever date is later).

The changes to municipal boundaries result in some significant changes to municipal allocations in 2016/17. To cushion the impact of these changes, all municipalities will receive at least 95 per cent of the equitable share formula allocation indicatively allocated to them in 2016/17 in the 2015 Division of Revenue Act. For merged municipalities, this guarantee will be based on the sum of the equitable share allocations to the previously separate municipalities. In cases where a municipality has been split, the guarantee is applied to an area's share of the former municipality's equitable share, based on its portion of the population in the former municipality.

The role of the Change Management Committee is critical in ensuring that budget policies for the newly demarcated municipalities are developed. The MECs for local government have issued provincial gazettes in terms of section 14 of the Municipal Structures Act, 1998 (Act No 117 of 1998)(LGMSA) detailing the transitional process for municipalities affected by re-demarcations.

2. The South African economy and inflation targets

The 2016 Budget Review notes that since the tabling of the Medium Term Budget Policy Statement (MTBPS) in October 2015 the global economic crisis has deepened, exposing the depth of South Africa's external vulnerabilities and the internal constraints that limit its potential for growth. Global conditions have exposed South Africa's own economic weaknesses, with projected GDP growth revised down to 0.9 per cent for 2016 improving gradually to 1.7 per cent in 2017 and 2.4 per cent in 2018.

The weaker outlook is as a result of lower commodity prices, higher borrowing costs, drought and diminished business and consumer confidence. Constrained electricity supply continues to limit growth and deter fixed investment. Exchange rate depreciation is contributing to a higher inflation outlook during 2016.

These factors are expected to ease over the medium term. An upturn in global trade and investment, improved policy certainty, recovering consumer and business confidence, and greater availability and reliability of electricity in the outer years should support stronger growth.

Job creation remains one of the most pressing concerns for the economy. Headline employment grew by 3.7 per cent in the first three quarters of 2015. According to Statistics South Africa, 19 000 jobs were created in the formal sector and 273 000 in the informal sector in the first three quarters of 2015. The unemployment rate stood at 25.5 per cent in the third quarter of 2015, with the number of South Africans categorised as long-term unemployed 5.7 per cent higher than in 2014.

Higher inflation and weaker employment growth will impact on the ability of all municipalities to generate and collect revenue on services, to keep expenditures within budgeted allocations, and to borrow to fund capital expenditure programmes at affordable rates. Therefore it is critical for municipalities to review how they conduct their business to ensure value for money is obtained in all their expenditures, that revenue administration systems are operating effectively, that borrowing programmes are realistic, and that creditors (including bulk service providers) continue to be paid timeously and in full.

Municipalities must take the following macro-economic forecasts into consideration when preparing their 2016/17 budgets and MTREF.

Table 1: Macroeconomic performance and projections, 2014/15 – 2018/19

Fiscal year	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
	Actual	Estimate	Forecast		
CPI Inflation	5.6%	5.4%	6.6%	6.2%	5.9%
Real GDP growth	1.6%	0.9%	1.2%	1.9%	2.5%

Source: 2016 Budget Review

Note: the fiscal year referred to is the national fiscal year (April to March) which is more closely aligned to the municipal fiscal year (July to June) than the calendar year inflation.

3. Key focus areas for the 2016/17 budget process

3.1 Local government conditional grants and additional allocations

The purpose of the conditional grants is to deliver on national government priorities relating to service delivery. Additional funding is allocated in the form of unconditional allocations such as the equitable share and the sharing of the general fuel levy. The main purpose of the equitable share is to fund the provision of free basic services to the poor.

Over the 2016 MTEF period, R339.6 billion will be transferred directly to local government and a further R22.9 billion has been allocated to indirect grants. Direct transfers to local government over the 2016 MTEF period account for 9.1 per cent of national government's non-interest expenditure. The total spending on local government increases to 9.8 per cent of national non-interest expenditure when indirect transfers are added.

Direct transfers to local government grow at an annual average rate of 6.8 per cent over the 2016 MTEF period. Transfers to local government tabled in the 2016 MTEF have been reduced to make funding available for other government priorities. Over the MTEF period, local government allocations decrease by R967 million. Despite these reductions, total allocations to local government still grow at an annual average rate of 6.7 per cent over the MTEF period.

Municipalities are reminded that all allocations included in the budgets must correspond to the allocations listed in the Division of Revenue Bill. All the budget documentation can be located on the National Treasury website by clicking on the link below:
http://www.treasury.gov.za/documents/national%20budget/2016/

Changes to local government allocations

- The *local government equitable share* - the 2016 budget reduces the baseline allocation by R300 million, or 0.6 per cent, in 2016/17. In 2017/18 and 2018/19, R1.5 billion and R3 billion are added respectively to offset the rising costs of basic services. These amounts revise downwards the 2015 MTBPS medium-term projection of an additional R6 billion. This change is as a result of government's reprioritisation of expenditure.

- The *municipal demarcation transition grant* allocation – a total of R409.3 million has been allocated in 2016/17 and 2017/18 to fund the changes in municipal boundaries in affected municipalities.

- The *municipal systems improvement grant* has been reconfigured as an indirect grant from 2016/17 to help poorly performing municipalities with revenue collection, performance management and record keeping. Regional management support will also be provided to groups of municipalities facing common institutional weaknesses.

- A total of R350 million is added to the *bucket eradication programme grant* in 2016/17 to complete the eradication of bucket sanitation systems in formal residential areas. The *urban settlements development grant,* the *human settlements development grant* and the *municipal infrastructure grant* will continue to fund the upgrade of sanitation in informal settlements through various projects focused on improving these areas. An amount of R155 million is also reprioritised into the *regional bulk infrastructure grant*.

- There is also a small shift of funds from the *municipal infrastructure grant* to the *urban settlements development grant* to account for the absorption of Naledi Local Municipality (which receives the *municipal infrastructure grant*) into Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality (which receives the *urban settlements development grant*).

Reforms to local government infrastructure grants

The National Treasury, in collaboration with the Department of Cooperative Governance, the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, SALGA and the FFC, has reviewed the system of local government infrastructure grants.

Following an intergovernmental review of the local government infrastructure grant system, significant changes are being made to the way these grants are structured. The changes include:

- Allowing municipalities to use conditional grant funds to repair and refurbish existing infrastructure. Spending of grant funds on refurbishment should be focused on infrastructure serving the poor and does not remove the responsibility of municipalities to fund routine maintenance from the equitable share and own revenues. This will improve services and secure future revenue streams.

- Reducing the number of water and sanitation grants from four to two by merging of the previous *municipal water infrastructure grant*, the *water services operating subsidy grant* and the *rural household infrastructure grant* to create a new *water services infrastructure grant*. The regional bulk infrastructure grant is to fund large bulk-water and sanitation projects, and the water services infrastructure grant is to fund construction and refurbishment of reticulation schemes and on-site services in rural municipalities.

- A new formula to allocate the R6 billion per year set aside to upgrade public transport in 13 cities. The previous system incentivised cities to plan overly expensive systems in the hope of receiving more funding. The new formula provides greater certainty about the long-term support government will provide, and allows cities to plan affordable and sustainable infrastructure upgrades.

4. Revenue management

National Treasury continues to encourage municipalities to keep increases in property rates, tariffs for trading services and charges for other municipal own revenue sources within the parameters of the country's inflation rate. Furthermore, municipalities must adopt a tariff setting methodology that achieves an appropriate balance between the interests of poor households and other customers while ensuring financial sustainability of the municipality. Demand management is becoming increasingly necessary as the country faces water shortages and an unstable electricity supply. The approach to tariff setting should consider all these factors and strive to achieve an equitable balance.

It is anticipated that the cost of providing municipal services will grow at a faster rate than the transfers from national government. Resource scarcity will most likely increase the cost of bulk purchases in respect of water and electricity beyond the country's inflationary targets.

Furthermore, providing for free basic services in the case of poorer households must be carefully considered and, where some municipalities have opted to provide this benefit to ALL households, this may not be financially sustainable in the long-term. Where appropriate, a municipality should re-evaluate the costs and benefits of universal or targeted provision of free basic services subsidies, in order to protect their delivery to poor households in particular. At no point should the provision of these subsidies remove resources from programmes that will expand access to infrastructure services for presently un-served households.

Where municipalities do not have an adequate revenue base and where municipalities face a combination of challenges such as resource scarcity, high unemployment and slower than average economic growth, an aggressive approach to curbing non-core spending and improving operational efficiencies is strongly advised.

4.1 Tariff setting

There are several tools available and methodologies employed to determine the appropriate tariffs for water and electricity services. Municipalities may favour different approaches but the principles of tariff setting should be consistently applied.

Municipalities should consider the following practicalities when setting tariffs:

- Costs of bulk purchases and the fluctuation in the seasonal cost thereof;
- Consumption patterns to enable better demand planning and management; and
- In the event that municipalities have been under recovering costs, embark on a process to correct their tariff structures over a reasonable time period so that cost reflective tariffs are achieved.

The tariff setting process is reliant on sound baseline information such as the number of properties within the municipal area of jurisdiction, the values of these properties, the number of households identified as indigent or poor, the consumption patterns in respect of basic services and the growth patterns within the various geographic areas.

4.2 Eskom bulk tariff increases

In terms of the Multi Year Price Determination (MYPD) for Eskom's tariffs approved by the National Energy Regulator of South Africa (NERSA), a tariff increase of 9.4 per cent has been approved for the 2016/17 financial year. However NERSA has not yet approved and published guidelines on municipal electricity price increase for the 2016/17 financial year.

Municipalities are urged to examine the cost structure of providing electricity services and to apply to NERSA for electricity tariff increases that reflect the total cost of providing the service so that they work towards achieving financial sustainability.

5. Funding choices and management issues

Municipalities should carefully consider the costs associated with service delivery while keeping in mind affordability and inflation when setting revenue raising measures. Once again, approving tariffs that are far below levels representing the cost of providing the services would negatively impact on the financial sustainability of municipalities.

5.1 Employee related costs

The South African Local Government Bargaining Council recently entered into a three-year *Salary and Wage Collective Agreement* for the period 01 July 2015 to 30 June 2018. The agreement reached is as follows:

- *2015/16 Financial Year – 7 per cent*
- *2016/17 Financial Year – average CPI (Feb 2015 – Jan 2016) + 1 per cent*
- *2017/18 Financial Year – average CPI (Feb 2016 – Jan 2017) + 1 per cent*

Municipalities are advised to use this Salary and Wage Agreement preparing their 2016/17 MTREF budgets.

5.2 Remuneration of councilors

Municipalities are advised to budget for the actual costs approved in accordance with the gazette on the Remuneration of Public Office Bearers Act: Determination of Upper Limits of Salaries, Allowances and Benefits of different members of municipal councils published on 21 December 2015 by the Department of Cooperative Governance.

5.3 Cost containment measures

In the 2016 State of the Nation Address by the President, the cost containment measures announced by the Minister of Finance in 2013 were re-emphasised. It was highlighted that excessive and wasteful expenditure has been reduced, but there is still more to be done to cut

wastage. In addition the President announced some new measures which include, amongst others:

- Curtailment of overseas trips and the submission of strong motivations by those requesting permission to travel i.e. the benefit to the country needs to be proved ; and
- Institution of further restrictions on conferences, catering, entertainment and social functions.

The Minister of Finance announced further measures in his budget speech on 24 February 2016. The Mayors of municipalities were urged to join in eliminating wasteful expenditure in government.

The advice provided in MFMA Budget Circular (No. 58, 66, 70, 72, 74 and 75) on cost containment measures and elimination of non-priority spending is still applicable to municipalities. A separate MFMA Circular will be issued on cost containment measures. In addition National Treasury is firstly in a process of reviewing the National Treasury instruction on cost containment measures which was issued to accounting officers of departments and secondly, determining its applicability to local government. Once the process has been concluded, a Regulation on cost containment measures applicable to local government will be issued.

Municipalities were advised in MFMA Circular No. 70 to align their budgeting policies to the cost containment measures to the extent possible as approved by Cabinet in 2013. Municipalities are requested to table the cost containment measures in council and to submit evidence thereof to the National and Provincial Treasuries together with the budget documentation in terms of the MFMA. .

5.4 2016/17 MTREF budget assessment

The National Treasury has continuously advised municipalities in previous budget circulars on financial management issues to be considered when compiling budgets. The 2016/17 MTREF budget assessment will critically consider the following:

- Cost reflective tariffs;
- Appropriateness of budget assumptions;
- Provision for asset renewal and maintenance;
- Credibility and level of funding of the budget (funded or not funded); and
- Alignment of the budgets to municipality's plans.

Therefore municipalities must ensure that their 2016/17 MTREF addresses the items listed above and further submit the methodology applied in setting tariffs when submitting budget documentation to the National Treasury in terms of the MFMA.

6. Conditional Grant Transfers to Municipalities

6.1 Overspending of conditional grants

Expenses incurred against conditional grants should be made in line with the allocations stated in the Division of Revenue Act (DoRA) as required by the Municipal Budget and Reporting Regulations (MBRR) in supporting tables SA 18 and 19. Municipalities must therefore adopt their annual budget in line with the allocations made in the DoRA.

In instances where municipalities overspent against their budgeted programmes, own revenue source should be used against such expenditure items. This implies that a debtor cannot be raised against the transferring national officer's future allocations.

6.2 Criteria for the rollover of conditional grant funds

The criteria published in MFMA Budget Circular No. 75 are still applicable when considering rollover requests. Municipalities must submit the required information or application to National Treasury by 31 August 2016, if not, the application will not be considered.

When considering rollover requests from municipalities, all unspent cash backed grants should be classified only as "Cash and cash equivalents". This number must also reconcile with the cash flow statements. All conditional grants must be spent in line with the conditions for which they are set for. They must not be invested.

6.3 Payment procedure on conditional grants

Conditional grants are paid in line with the approved payment schedule and are captured and authorised three days in advance. These payments include revised payment schedules, amended payment schedules, and withheld payments and rollovers credit payments.

7. The Municipal Budget and Reporting Regulations

National Treasury has released Version 2.8 of Schedule A1 (the Excel Formats). This version incorporates minor changes (see Annexure A). Therefore **ALL** municipalities **MUST** use this version for the preparation of their 2016/17 Budget and MTREF.
Download Version 2.8 of Schedule A1 by clicking HERE

The Municipal Budget and Reporting Regulations, formats and associated guides are available on National Treasury's website at:
http://mfma.treasury.gov.za/RegulationsandGazettes/Pages/default.aspx

7.1 Assistance with the compilation of budgets

If municipalities require advice with the compilation of their respective budgets, specifically the budget documents or Schedule A1, they should direct their enquiries to their respective provincial treasuries or to the following National Treasury official as follows:

	Responsible NT officials	Tel. No.	Email
Eastern Cape	Templeton Phogole	012-315 5044	Templeton.Phogole@treasury.gov.za
	Matjatji Mashoeshoe	012-315 6567	Matjatji.Mashoeshoe@treasury.gov.za
Free State	Vincent Malepa	012-315 5539	Vincent.Malepa@treasury.gov.za
	Cethekile Moshane	012-315 5079	Cethekile.moshane@treasury.gov.za
	Katlego Mabiletsa	012-395 6742	Katlego.Mabiletsa@treasury.gov.za
Gauteng	Kgomotso Baloyi	012-315 5866	Kgomotso.Baloyi@treasury.gov.za
	Nomxolisi Mawulana	012-315 5460	Nomxolisi.Mawulana@treasury.gov.za
KwaZulu-Natal	Bernard Mokgabodi	012-315 5936	Bernard.Mokgabodi@treasury.gov.za
	Johan Botha	012-315 5171	Johan.Botha@treasury.gov.za
Limpopo	Una Rautenbach	012-315 5700	Una.Rautenbach@treasury.gov.za
	Sifiso Mabaso	012-315 5952	Sifiso.Mabaso@treasury.gov.za
Mpumalanga	Jordan Maja	012-315 5663	Jordan.Maja@treasury.gov.za
	Anthony Moseki	012-315 5174	Anthony.Moseki@treasury.gov.za
Northern Cape	Willem Voigt	012-315 5830	Willem.Voigt@treasury.gov.za
	Mandla Gilimani	012-315 5807	Mandla.Gilimani@treasury.gov.za
North West	Sadesh Ramjathan	012-315 5101	Sadesh.Ramjathan@treasury.gov.za

	Makgabo Mabotja	012-315 5156	Makgabo.Mabotja@treasury.gov.za
Western Cape	Vuyo Mbunge Kevin Bell	012-315 5661 012-315 5725	Vuyo.Mbunge@treasury.gov.za Kevin.Bell@treasury.gov.za
Technical issues with Excel formats	Elsabe Rossouw	012-315 5534	lgdataqueries@treasury.gov.za

National Treasury, together with the provincial treasuries, will undertake a compliance check and, where municipalities have not provided complete budget information, the municipal budgets will be returned to the mayors and municipal managers of the affected municipalities for the necessary corrections. Municipal managers are reminded that the annual budget must be accompanied by a 'quality certificate' in accordance with the format as set out in item 31 of Schedule A in the Municipal Budget and Reporting Regulations.

The National Treasury needs to emphasise that where municipalities have not adhered to the Municipal Budget and Reporting Regulations, ***those municipalities will be required to go back to the municipal council and table a complete budget document aligned to the requirement of the Municipal Budget and Reporting Regulations***.

Municipalities with municipal entities are once again reminded to prepare consolidated budgets and in-year reports for both the parent municipality and its entity or entities in that they are to produce:

- An annual budget, adjustment budget and monthly financial statements for the parent municipality in the relevant formats; and
- A consolidated annual budget, adjustments budget and monthly financial statements for the parent municipality and all its municipal entities in the relevant formats.

The A Schedule that the municipality submits to National Treasury must be a consolidated budget for the municipality (plus entities) and not the budget of the parent municipality only.

8. Budget process and submissions for the 2016/17 MTREF

8.1 Submitting budget documentation and schedules for 2016/17 MTREF

To facilitate oversight of compliance with the Municipal Budget and Reporting Regulations, accounting officers are reminded that:

- Section 22(b)(i) of the MFMA requires that ***immediately*** after an annual budget is tabled in a municipal council, it must be submitted to the National Treasury and the relevant provincial treasury in both printed and electronic formats. If the annual budget is tabled to council on 31 March 2016, the final date of submission of the electronic budget documents and corresponding electronic returns is **Friday, 01 April 2016**. The deadline for submission of hard copies including council resolution is **Friday, 8 April 2016**.
- Section 24(3) of the MFMA, read together with regulation 20(1), requires that the approved annual budget must be submitted to both National Treasury and the relevant provincial treasury ***within ten working days*** after the council has approved the annual budget. If the council only approves the annual budget on 30 June 2016, the final date for such a submission is **Thursday, 14 July 2016**, otherwise an earlier date applies.

The municipal manager must submit:

- the budget documentation as set out in Schedule A (version 2.8) of the Municipal Budget and Reporting Regulations, including the main Tables (A1 - A10) and ALL the supporting tables (SA1 – SA37) in both printed and electronic formats;
- the draft service delivery and budget implementation plan in both printed and electronic format;
- the draft integrated development plan;
- the council resolution;
- signed Quality Certificate as prescribed in the Municipal Budget and Reporting Regulations;
- **schedules D, E and F specific for the entities**;
- signed budget locking certificate as found on the website;
- service level standards; and
- *m*SCOA implementation plan and progress to date.

Municipalities are required to send electronic versions of documents and the A1 schedule to lgdocuments@treasury.gov.za.

If the budget documents are too large to be sent via email (exceeds 4MB) please submit to lgbigfiles@gmail.com. Any problems experienced in this regard can be addressed with Elsabe Rossouw at Elsabe.Rossouw@treasury.gov.za.

All new municipalities must submit the 2016/17 MTREF as soon as it is adopted by the newly elected council.

Municipalities are required to send printed submissions of their budget documents and council resolution to:

For couriered documents	***For posted documents***
Ms Linda Kruger	Ms Linda Kruger
National Treasury	National Treasury
40 Church Square	Private Bag X115
Pretoria, 0002	Pretoria, 0001

In addition to the above mentioned budget documentation, metropolitan municipalities must submit the Built Environment Performance Plan (BEPP) tabled in council on 31 May 2016 to Yasmin.coovadia@treasury.gov.za. If the BEPP documents are too large to be sent via email (exceeds 4MB) please submit to yasmin.coovadia@gmail.com or send to Yasmin Coovadia via Dropbox; any problems experienced in this regard can be addressed with Yasmin.Coovadia@treasury.gov.za. Hard copies of the BEPP may be sent to Yasmin Coovadia, National Treasury, 3rd floor 40 Church Square, Pretoria, 0002 or Private Bag X115, Pretoria, 0001.

8.2 Budget reform returns to the Local Government Database for publication

For publication purposes, municipalities are still required to use the Budget Reform Returns to upload budget and monthly expenditure to the National Treasury Local Government Database. All returns are to be sent to lgdatabase@treasury.gov.za.

Municipalities are requested to submit returns for both the draft budget and the final adopted budget.

This will assist the National and provincial treasuries with the annual benchmark process. The aligned electronic returns may be downloaded from National Treasury's website at the following link: http://mfma.treasury.gov.za/Return_Forms/Pages/default.aspx.

8.3 Municipal Standard Chart of Accounts (*m*SCOA)[1]

The *m*SCOA Regulations apply to all municipalities and municipal entities with effect from 1 July 2017 and only seven months remain for preparation and implementation readiness as the 2017/18 MTREF budgets will all have to be aligned to *m*SCOA. It is critical for municipalities to start budgeting on *m*SCOA by September 2016 to go live on 01 July 2017.

Municipalities are reminded that the current reporting requirements will remain in place until the National Treasury considers the implementation of the *m*SCOA and the new reporting reforms are no longer a risk. Those who do not adhere to the prescribed reporting according to the MBRR and the submission of the Budget reform returns to the National Treasury Local Government database will be regarded as non-compliant for publication purposes (refer to paragraph 8.2).

Municipalities that are implementing the *m*SCOA must use the latest version of the *m*SCOA classification framework at the link below when compiling the 2016/17 MTREF.

http://mfma.treasury.gov.za/RegulationsandGazettes/MunicipalRegulationsOnAStandardChartOfAccountsFinal/Pages/default.aspx

The MBRR Schedules will remain as is until further notice.

8.4 General

Municipalities use external service providers' e-mails as a result of weak or poor Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The affected municipalities are urged to use official e-mail addresses linked to the institution; therefore they must address the ICT challenges experienced.

Contact

national treasury
Department:
National Treasury
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Post	Private Bag X115, Pretoria 0001
Phone	012 315 5009
Fax	012 395 6553
Website	http://www.treasury.gov.za/default.aspx

JH Hattingh
Chief Director: Local Government Budget Analysis
07 March 2016

[1] The Minister of Finance promulgated the Municipal Regulations on a Standard Chart of Accounts in government gazette Notice No. 37577 on 22 April 2014.

Annexure A – Changes to Schedule A1 – the 'Excel formats'

As noted above, National Treasury has released Version 2.8 of Schedule A1 (the Excel Formats). It incorporates the following changes:

No.	Sheet/ Table	Amendment	Reason
1	A10	Cost of free basic services	Improve reporting of services provided including informal settlements.
2	SA1	Revenue foregone	Improve reporting on revenue foregone and cost of free basic services.
3	SA9	Provision of free basic services	To provide detailed breakdown of free basic services which links to A10.

Annexure B – Previous MFMA Circulars

Budget management issues dealt with in previous MFMA Circulars

Municipalities are reminded to refer to MFMA Circulars 48, 51, 54, 55, 66, 67 and 70 with regards to the following issues:

1. *Mayor's discretionary funds and similar discretionary budget allocation* – National Treasury regards allocations that are not designated for a specific purpose to be bad practice and discourage them (refer to MFMA Circular 51).
2. *Unallocated ward allocations* – National Treasury does not regard this to be a good practice, because it means that the tabled budget does not reflect which ward projects are planned for purposes of public consultation and council approval (refer to MFMA Circular 51).
3. *New office buildings* – Municipalities are required to send detailed information to National Treasury if they are contemplating building new main office buildings (refer to MFMA Circular 51).
4. *Virement policies of municipalities* – Municipalities are reminded of the principles that must be incorporated into municipal virements policies (refer to MFMA Circular 51).
5. *Providing clean water and managing waste water* – Municipalities were reminded to include a section on 'Drinking water quality and waste water management' in their budget document (refer to MFMA Circular 54).
6. *Renewal and repairs and maintenance of existing assets* – Allocations to repairs and maintenance, and the renewal of existing infrastructure must be prioritised. Municipalities must provide detailed motivations in their budget documentation if allocations do not meet the required benchmarks set out in MFMA Circular 55 and 66.
7. *Credit cards and debit cards linked to municipal bank accounts are not permitted* – On 02 August 2011 National Treasury issued a directive to all banks informing them that as from 01 September 2011 they are not allowed to issue credit cards or debit cards linked to municipal bank accounts (refer to MFMA Circular 55).
8. *Water and sanitation tariffs must be cost reflective* - refer to MFMA Circular 66.
9. *Solid waste tariffs* – refer to MFMA Circular 70.
10. *Variances between 4th Quarter section 71 results and annual financial statements* – refer to Circular 67.
11. *Additional In-Year reporting requirements* – refer to MFMA Circular 67.
12. *Appropriation statement (reconciliation: budget and in-year performance)- reference is made to circular 67.* It came to the attention of National Treasury that a number of municipalities did not include the appropriation statement as part of their 2012/13 or 2013/14 annual financial statement. In terms of the Standards of GRAP 24 on the Presentation of Budget Information in Financial Statements, municipalities are required to present their original and adjusted budgets against actual outcome in the annual financial statements. This is considered an appropriation statement and the comparison between the budget and actual performance should be a mirror image of each other as it relates to the classification and grouping of revenue and expenditure as has been the case in a national and provincial context. This statement is subject to auditing and accordingly supporting documentation would be required to substantiate the compilation of this statement.
13. *Eliminating non-priority spending* – The 2013 MTBPS emphasised the need for government to step-up its efforts to combat waste, inefficiency and corruption (refer to MFMA circular 70).
14. *Council oversight over the budget process* – refer to MFMA Circular 70.

Conditional grant issues dealt with in previous MFMA Circulars

Municipalities are reminded to refer to MFMA Circulars 48, 51, 54, 55 and 67 with regards to the following issues:

1. *Accounting treatment of conditional grants*: Municipalities are reminded that in accordance with accrual accounting principles, conditional grants should only be treated as 'transfers recognized' revenue when the grant revenue has been 'earned' by incurring expenditure in accordance with the conditions of the grant.
2. *VAT on conditional grants:* SARS has issued a specific guide to assist municipalities meeting their VAT obligations – ***VAT 419 Guide for Municipalities***. To assist municipalities accessing this guide it has been placed on the National Treasury website at: http://mfma.treasury.gov.za/Guidelines/Pages/default.aspx
3. *Interest received and reclaimed VAT in respect of conditional grants:* Municipalities are reminded that in MFMA Circular 48, National Treasury determined that:
   - Interest received on conditional grant funds must be treated as 'own revenue' and its use by the municipality is not subject to any special conditions; and
   - 'Reclaimed VAT' in respect of conditional grant expenditures must be treated as 'own revenue' and its use by the municipality is not subject to any special conditions.
4. *Appropriation of conditional grants that are rolled over* – As soon as a municipality receives written approval from National Treasury that its unspent conditional grants have been rolled-over it may proceed to spend such funds (refer to MFMA Circular 51 for other arrangements in this regard).
5. *Pledging of conditional grant transfers* – the 2015 Division of Revenue Bill contained a provision that allows municipalities to pledge their conditional grants. The end date for the pledges is extended to 2017/18. The process of application as set out in MFMA Circular 51 remains unchanged.
6. *Separate reporting for conditional grant roll-overs* – National Treasury has put in place a separate template for municipalities to report on the spending of conditional grant roll-overs. Municipalities are reminded that conditional grant funds can only be rolled-over once, so if they remain unspent in the year in which they were rolled-over they MUST revert to the National Revenue Fund.
7. *Payment schedule* – National Treasury has instituted an automated payment system of transfers to municipalities in order to ensure appropriate safety checks are put in place. Only the primary banking details verified by National Treasury will be used for effecting transfers.
8. *Conditional grant transfers/payments, the responsibilities of transferring and receiving authorities and the criteria for the rollover of conditional grants –* It is important that the transfers made to municipalities' are transparent, and properly captured in the municipalities' budgets. MFMA Circular no: 67 in this regard refers. The criterion for the rollover of conditional grants is stipulated in MFMA Circular no: 51.

MBRR issues dealt with in previous MFMA Circulars

Municipalities are reminded to refer to MFMA Circulars 48, 51, 54, 55 with regards to the following issues:

1. *Budgeting for revenue and 'revenue foregone'* – The 'realistically anticipated revenues to be collected' that must be reflected on the Budgeted Statement of Financial Performance (Tables A2, A3 and A4) must exclude 'revenue foregone'. The definition

of 'revenue foregone' and how it is distinguished from 'transfers and grants' is explained in MFMA Circular 51.

2. *Preparing and amending budget related policies* – Information on all budget related policies and any amendments to such policies must be included in the municipality's annual budget document (refer to MFMA Circular 54).
3. *2013/14 MTREF Funding Compliance Assessment* – All municipalities were required to perform the funding compliance assessment outlined in *MFMA Funding Compliance Guideline* and to include the relevant information outlined in MFMA Circular 55 in their 2015/16 budgets (refer to MFMA Circular 55).
4. *Tabling a funded budget* - It is critical that municipalities adopt and implement funded budgets as per Section 18 of the MFMA. Tables A7 and A8 which if completed correctly by the municipality, it will provide most of the information required to evaluate whether a municipality's operating and capital budgets are **funded** or not.